

Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Children's Trust Fund of Alabama



Parent Advisory Council

The Alabama Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is a strategic partner with the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund. The PAC ensures there are strong parent voices in shaping programs, services and strategies that result in better outcomes for children and families. Parent council members bring a diverse range of expertise in prevention strategies and resources and in helping support families across the state of Alabama.

BIOGRAPHIES



Vilma Blanco

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2

Vilma is a single mother who resides in Dothan, Alabama and is raising three children on her own. Vilma first became a mother at 21 years-of-age. She recalls that this was a very challenging time for her as she struggled with recurring depression and postpartum depression. Despite these difficulties, Vilma's

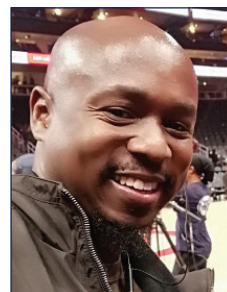
main mission has always been to provide a healthy and loving environment for her children.

Vilma shared that her early childhood years were very traumatic for her and her two siblings as they were exposed to both emotional and physical abuse. In addition, she described her mother as suffering from serious mental illness. When Vilma gave birth to her first son, Gabe, she found herself back in an unhealthy environment repeating the cycle of abuse. Vilma shared that she remained in a domestic violence relationship for 12 years.

She changed the direction of her life when she became involved with an amazing nonprofit organization called The Exchange Center for Child Abuse Prevention. After two years of counseling, she had her second child Michael. While she still continued in an unhealthy relationship with her partner, she began to focus on becoming a better mother. She and her partner and her two children relocated to Georgia. Vilma was diagnosed with Breast Cancer in 2016 and she also learned that she was pregnant with her third child, a miracle child, named Julissa. After Vilma had successfully overcome her health issues with cancer, she realized that she no longer wanted to

continue the unhealthy relationship she was in and she moved back to Alabama with her children.

Vilma immediately went back to The Exchange Center where she found refuge and counseling once again. Though these services, she learned to love herself, become resilient and gain self-confidence. The Exchange Center provided her with opportunities to learn new life skills and parenting strategies. The organization also provided her with numerous resources and a support system in her community where she has developed strong connections with other parents. Today, Vilma has a full-time job at a hospital and provides her children with a loving, nurturing and healthy home. She is always eager to share her story with others to provide them with hope and inspiration. Her motto is: "Always remember quality of life versus quantity!"



Herman Boleware

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2

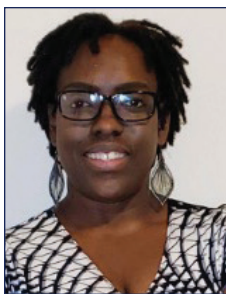
Herman is the proud father of four children ranging in ages from five to 22 years. Although all of his children are doing well today, he recognizes how the early years of parenting were some of the most challenging times for him. Fortunately, he received support from the Family Guidance Center. Herman shares

how the Guidance Center was so important in many aspects of his family's life – from receiving groceries, learning new parenting skills to career development and resume writing. The parenting classes were especially valuable in helping Herman deal with stressors and learn new and effective parenting strategies to address the different developmental stages and

ages of his children. Today, he continues to refer families to the Family Guidance Center because of his own positive and supportive experience that he and his family had.

Herman has been working as a manager at Big Lots Distribution Center for the past six years. He uses his knowledge he gained from Alabama State University where he obtained his bachelor's degree in public relations and his master's degree in business. He also enjoyed his previous employment as an assistant pastor. He was unable to continue this work because of the pandemic. He loved being there and giving back to his community with barbecues and family events.

Herman enjoys meeting other members of the community and sharing resources with them. This is one reason he is interested in serving on the Alabama Parent Advisory Council. He recognizes how important it is for others to have a supportive place to go when they need help. In addition, he sees the valuable role fathers play in their children's lives and is hoping that he can encourage more fathers to join the council.



Sarita Edwards CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 5

Sarita is a mom of five children ranging from 23 to four years of age. They live in Madison, Alabama.

In 2017, Sarita gave birth to a son prenatally diagnosed with a rare chromosome abnormality named Edwards Syndrome, Full Trisomy 18. This

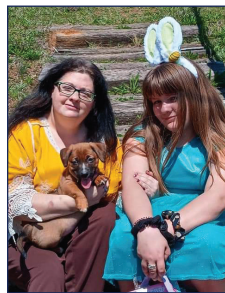
was when Sarita began focusing on advocacy and public policy related to children and families. Sarita and her husband, Kareem, established the EWE Foundation, a 501(c)(3) healthcare advocacy organization to create better healthcare outcomes for families affected by Edwards Syndrome.

After participating in a 6-week parenting course, *Every Person Influences Children* (EPIC) to strengthen her knowledge of childhood behavior, positive reinforcements, and effective communication, Sarita and her husband launched the Literacy, Education, Advocacy, and Policy Program (LEAP). The LEAP program is an instructional resource program promoting health literacy, community education and patient advocacy. Today, Sarita is the CEO and President of the EWE Foundation.

In addition to the work she does with the foundation, Sarita is a host of the Being Rare podcast, a rare disease legislative advocate and a member of multiple coalitions and work groups promoting health and medical equity. She serves as a community congress member providing advice and insight on urgent policy initiatives. She also serves on the executive board for other nonprofit community organizations and is a member of advisory councils within the state and across the country. Sarita and her family were recognized as a 2020 Madison Family of the Year Nominee and received Commemorative Coins from Madison City Council because of their contributions to the community and their positive impact to the city. In addition, Sarita was recognized as a Rocket City Mom in 2021 and also received the Awesome Mom of Huntsville award.

Sarita is looking forward to serving on the Alabama Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and hopes that together they can identify community resource needs

and areas needing improvement. She believes the PAC will promote the parent perspective to create a more proactive approach to crisis prevention, interventions, identify resource accessibility and identify challenges and barriers that delay implementing services.



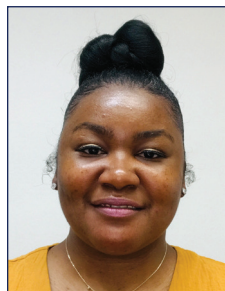
Christy Efrud CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

Christy is a single mother to Rose, a beautiful, wonderful, and intelligent 11-year-old. They reside in Sylacauga, Alabama, a small town in Talladega County.

Christy started out in the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters)

program with her daughter. The HIPPY program provided her with services such as home visitation, parent involvement and school readiness tools to help her prepare Rose for success in school and beyond. Christy also took parenting classes with Safe Family Services, and was grateful for the support and saw how valuable this program is for helping families. She then started participating in the Alabama Parent Leadership Network, and has been a member for the past five years and works as a parent educator. In addition to making a lot of great connections with other parent leaders in Alabama, the network has provided Christy with some excellent opportunities such as being able to participate in the Alabama Parent Leadership Academy each year. Most importantly, she appreciates being able to develop her own skills and knowledge as a parent leader in Alabama.

Christy served on the Alabama Children's Trust Fund Parent Advisory Council Planning Committee and played a major role in helping to develop the new Parent Advisory Council (PAC) on which she now serves. Her goal in life is to be a better parent to her daughter and she hopes to help other families. She believes she can help other parents become effective parent educators. Christy lives by the saying: "God is not done with me yet. God has something in store for everyone and for me that is being a parent educator and friend."



Rosezina Kelley CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

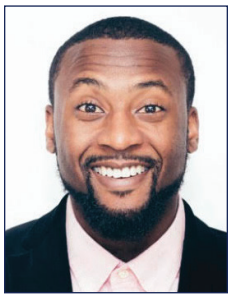
Rosezina is a single mother of four children who all reside in Mobile, Alabama. In their spare time, they enjoy going to the beach and sitting on the pier to meditate and journal. Afterwards, they have open conversations about current events or situations they want to vent about.

This is how Rosezina and her children stay connected and up-to-date on personal issues that each of them face. This is also an opportunity to share how they each overcome challenges they may have. Another activity they enjoy is walking the nature trails at the local Medal of Honor Park to soak up the sun and get some exercise.

At the age of 27, Rosezina decided to take a stand for herself and her children by leaving a toxic long-term relationship. With only a few dollars saved and limited clothing for each child, she made her way back to Mobile

to stay with her mother and get back on her feet. After a year of struggling to find employment, she swallowed her pride and applied for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). Although she felt embarrassed because of the stigma society places on welfare recipients, it was the best decision she ever made. She participated in the JOBS program, which helped prepare her for job readiness. After six months of participating in the program, she was successful in finding a job and that jump started her new life journey of becoming an independent single mother.

Today Rosezina is an Administrative Assistant for Coastal Family Partners, a nonprofit organization that serves the community through mission work, free respite services for caregivers of children with special needs and free parenting workshops. She is currently working on her bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resource Management. As a member of the Alabama Parent Advisory Council, she hopes to address poverty and bring awareness and resources related to mental health issues to families in urban communities.



Churmell Mitchell CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

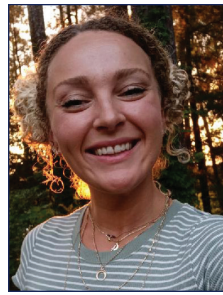
Churmell is a single father of two beautiful children, Prince and Princess. Being a single father was difficult, and he is grateful for the community resources that helped him succeed. The Family Resource Center has helped him with childcare, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) vouchers, parenting classes and

concerns with the department of human resources.

Churmell has gained extensive experience and knowledge in leadership roles in community-based outreach programs as well as special event planning. Over the past two years, he has served as the Fatherhood Director at the Child Care Resource Center and has gained experience in learning how to manage and interact with staff members from diverse backgrounds. While serving in this leadership position, he has built solid relationships through effective communication while providing a superior level of client service. Churmell has also worked with juvenile students at Lee Count Youth Development Center and helped empower young men and women to make positive life choices for themselves. As a teacher and security guard at the Alternative school in Huntsville, Alabama he worked with students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Churmell has a bachelor's degree in physical activity and health from Auburn University. His professional expertise lies in successfully planning, developing and executing a variety of successful events, programs and activities. He sees himself in a vital role to empower the youth in multiple communities. As an accomplished event planner and community leader, he hopes to significantly contribute to the success of the work of the Alabama Parent Advisory Council.

Churmell loves to sing, play instruments, cook and travel – and he loves people. He loves finding ways to love others beyond the current hurt they experienced. His dreams include owning his own business and giving back to the homeless community.



Kayla Starr Etie CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 4

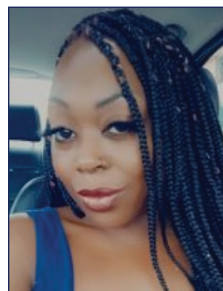
Kayla is an energetic mother who resides in Colbert County Alabama. At one point in time she was in need of community resources and was so grateful to attend the parenting courses available in her community.

Kayla works from home running a holistic medicine and network marketing business.

She found her passion for helping others and is now studying to become a Life Coach. She spends much of her time raising 10-year-old Bella and 3-year-old Milo to be happy, ambitious and progressive children. They enjoy being outside connecting with nature, and love traveling and meeting new people. She believes that success equals happiness, and it shows in her energy. Kayla enjoys roller skating with her children, going to festivals and is mindful in her parenting. She is a people person and teaches her children to love and be aware of other's circumstances.

Kayla found her need to help the community while in high school, where she volunteered countless hours to sing at local nursing homes, serve food at the homeless shelter and successfully organized fundraisers with the help of her favorite teacher, who is still an inspiration to her. Today she is an advocate for mental health and is constantly uplifting others in need of guidance. Kayla is committed to keeping her children involved with their community with city clean ups and kids' karaoke at the local pizza place. Her daughter has already started having city clean ups monthly and is advocating for curbside recycling in Tuscumbia.

As a member of the Alabama Parent Advisory Council, Kayla hopes to bring awareness to new ideas and help to innovative programs that support parents in times of sadness and happiness. Kayla enjoys sharing her knowledge of self-love and patient parenting, and hopes others will join her efforts in changing the world, one family at a time.



Jerijanniece Walker CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6

Jerijanniece, a native of Birmingham, Alabama, is an Entrepreneur, Artist, Owner, and Operator of S.W.E.A.T.S. (Sisters with Every Aspect to Succeed). She is also a single mother of two children, ages eleven and six years. She faced many hard obstacles earlier in her life and reached out for support from local Birmingham

agencies. She was determined to rebuild a strong life for herself and her children. Through her struggle, she developed her own self-help organization – S.W.E.A.T.S. – to help bring awareness to resources for women working to overcome substance use challenges and physical abuse.

Also, Jerijanniece successfully developed a foundation called Loads of Love. Through donations of toys and stuffed animals, the foundation staff provide many children in hospital settings with unique personalized gifts on special holidays.

In addition, Jerijanniece worked as the Press Secretary and City Liaison for Mayor Tom Henderson's re-election committee and the Press Secretary for Rod Scott, Jefferson County Treasurer. A dedicated and hard worker who wants to provide a positive image for her state and children, Jerijanniece believes it is important to go the extra mile to help another person in need. She is frequently quoted as saying, "Times may be challenging, but there is always time for change."



Vadonna Williams

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7

Vadonna is a devoted mother of two sons and a wife to husband, Leonard, since 1997. Being married at 18 years of age and having her first child at 19, prompted Vadonna to quickly learn what community resources were available for new parents. From Medicaid and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) appointments to

Parent Leadership training, Vadonna successfully navigated many systems and gained a wealth of knowledge about prevention.

She is a dedicated advocate for children and families in Tuscaloosa and throughout Alabama. She has nearly 16 years of parent leadership

experience. Some of the roles she has taken on include being a Parent Leadership Coordinator, Peer Leader and Facilitator of parenting classes.

Her past experience with Tuscaloosa's One Place as a Director of the Parenting Department, provided her with many opportunities to train both staff and parents on the use of parent leadership resources. Because of her strong leadership skills, Vadonna was appointed by the Governor of Alabama to serve as the Parent Representative on the Board of Directors for the Alabama Partnership for Children. She is also a founding member of the Alabama Partnership's Family Advisory Committee.

On a national level, she serves as a steering committee member for the National Early Childhood Family Network. She also serves on the FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council (PAC). FRIENDS, the National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), provides training and technical assistance to Federally funded CBCAP Programs. As a PAC member, Vadonna provides useful overall program direction and guidance to the activities of the National Center. She also shares her experience and expertise in child abuse prevention and family strengthening.

Vadonna is excited to join the Alabama PAC. Her hope is to strengthen her parent leadership skills and also be a support, mentor and advocate for the families in Alabama. She would like to also continue to use her voice to share with families information and resources about child abuse and neglect prevention.



Alabama Parent Advisory Council

The Alabama Parent Advisory Council (PAC) advises the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund (department/children's trust fund) about funding community-based prevention programs that help support and strengthen families. The PAC members provide their ideas and perspectives to help shape the future directions of the department. Parental involvement in decision-making is the key to having policies and programs that support families' strengths and needs. The department/children's trust fund is committed to partnering with the PAC to:

- Strengthen and support families
- Engage all community sectors in child maltreatment prevention strategies and activities.
- Reduce the need for out-of-home placement of children

The PAC is a diverse group of parents from across the state who have a range of expertise and personal experiences with prevention programs and resources in helping to strengthen their own families and overcome challenges in their lives. The PAC serves as a strategic partner with the department/children's trust fund to inform services and practices and to provide a greater understanding of family needs and service gaps. The PAC ensures there are strong parent voices in shaping programs, services and strategies that result in better outcomes for children and families. The PAC will assist in:

- Fostering parent leadership development
- Advocating on behalf of parents and other caregivers to promote improvements in prevention programming
- Modeling the value of partnerships between parents and staff

Role of the Parent Council Members

1. Actively advise the department/children's trust fund work related to prevention services provided in the community to families before they interact with the child welfare system.
2. Serve as a representative voice for parents in promoting improvements in prevention services and practices
3. Advise the department/children's trust fund on developing meaningful parent roles in its various service areas of prevention, family supports, in-home services, and other resources/services.
4. Develop resources to assist the staff in developing supportive, strengths-based strategies in their work with parents.
5. Promote and support implementation of the protective factors framework.
6. Serve in various other roles based on emerging needs of the department and the children's trust fund such as co-trainers, public speakers, reviewers of funding proposals, contributors to written materials, etc.
7. Participate, if interested and time permits, in the work of the Birth Parent National Network (BPNN), a diverse network of birth parents and organizations that promote policy and practice changes in prevention/child welfare system.
8. Work in partnership with the staff to further the agency's mission and goals.



The Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund is partnering with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance to coordinate the work of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The role of the Alliance is to support the needs of council members, to promote birth parents and practice change and provide outreach, communication, coaching, mentoring and one-to-one support.

The Alliance is the national membership organization for state Children's Trust and Prevention Funds (CTFs). It provides technical assistance, tools and resources for those working to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. Through its commitment to partnering with parents, the Alliance advocates for and supports strong parent voices related to strategies that ensure the safety and well-being of children throughout the country.

The Alliance is:

- A thought leader in the movement to strengthen and promote the well-being of children, families and communities
- A strong partner with parents
- A provider of training and technical assistance that translates knowledge to practice

BUILDING PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Alliance supports partnerships with parents at the national, state and program levels and offers technical assistance to develop and maintain Parent Advisory Councils and other parent partnership groups. The goal is to expand and advance the meaningful and authentic roles of parent leaders in shaping programs that are funded, the policies implemented and the strategies identified for strengthening families and communities. From self-leadership to facilitating policy change, the process of transforming a parent's self-image from a service recipient to a powerful change agent provides lasting positive outcomes for the parent leader and the entire system.

Learn more about the Alliance and its parent partnership work at:

ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents